



SINE DIE!!!!!!!!!!!!

By Ron C. Cross
Board of Commission Chairman

No, this is not a battle cry left over from World War II. It is the term used to signify the last day of the 2010 legislative session in Atlanta. A record was set this year as the longest session on record with Thursday, April 29, 2010 scheduled to be the final day - actually the fortieth day of official business.

When you read this, the session will be complete for this year and our legislators, Ben Harbin, Lee Anderson, and Barbara Sims in the House and Bill Jackson in the Senate, will be coming home to hear our comments on the new laws or the lack thereof. Let's look at a few of the main issues:

1. **Budget:** This was the main focus of this year's session. State revenue continues to drop, except for March, which showed a slight increase, and there is not enough money available to fund all state functions. The final approved budget will contain additional cuts for probably all state agencies in addition to cut-backs and furloughs already in place. The final cuts for state agencies operating in Columbia County will not be known until all details of the final state budget are published.

2. **Water Conservation:** This legislation was passed early in the session and the Governor has already signed it into law. It includes provisions for more efficient toilets and showers in new construction and the requirement for new apartments and condos to have separate water meters for each unit. It is small start on a major problem. This law did not address interbasin transfers, and the law prohibiting transfers into the Metro North Georgia Water District remains in effect. Your legislators and County government continue to work hard to be assured that Savannah River water stays in the Savannah River.

3. **Transportation:** The transportation funding bill (HB-277) passed both the house and senate and awaits the Governor's signature. This is a SPLOST (Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax) type project that creates 12 special tax districts, based on the Regional Commission (the old RDC) boundaries, and will allow the voters in 2012 to vote to fund a list of projects compiled by GDOT and the member counties. If approved, a 1% sales tax will be added in the district to fund transportation projects in that district. Twenty-five percent (25%) of the monies collected will be returned to the various counties for local projects not on the master list. This form of funding has been discussed for years and is finally on the table. At this time, we do not know if it is a good solution or not and will not know until all the details and requirements are revealed. Columbia County voters have always supported SPLOST projects, but how do you get twelve counties to agree on road networks. Also, will our money be used to support less successful counties? Either way, it will be four years before enough money is collected to start any work. I am glad that our County already has most of our road needs funded and in design.

4. **Property Tax Reform:** Senate Bill 346 has passed and awaits the Governor's John-Henry. This law will be complicated and does not seem to grant much relief. It does give property owners more rights and opportunities to appeal property assessments, and it gives the tax assessor's office more flexibility in meeting the state requirements for tax digest approval. We will publish this entire bill next month if it is signed into law. Hopefully, it will help people understand why their taxes increase when the county has not raised the millage rate in ten years. The state requirements for assessing property values have been the problem. Of course, we all prefer to live in a county where property values increase rather than decline.

All in all, this session of our lawmakers has been almost totally dominated by the budget situation. It is extremely difficult to develop programs and provide improvements without resources to provide funding. Columbia County is blessed to be in excellent financial condition. Through good management and assistance from staff and all Elected Officials, we have reduced the overall budget by 5% and have avoided furloughs and any reduction in services. Unfortunately, we do not know at this time the effect that continued state cuts will have on services by state agencies. We will continue to do all possible to provide any assistance to these agencies that are affected.



Pride of Georgia May 20-23

Clarks Hill Lake / Wildwood Park
Evans, GA

**Join us for all the family fun at the
Outdoors Expo Saturday & Sunday at noon!**

Weigh-in daily at 3:30
Gate entry fee \$5.00 per car

For more information on Columbia County, visit:
www.columbiacountyga.gov

As part of the Outdoor Expo on Saturday, the "Birds of Prey" will be on site with a demonstration at 1:00 pm. Other activities include a Sport Dogs Demonstration, Fishing Info and vendors with the newest equipment, boats & other gear.

The Center for Wildlife Education
& The Lamar Q Ball, Jr. Raptor Center
at Georgia Southern University

For info: (706) 541-0586

Community Calendar & Announcements

MAY

- 1 *Macro Biological Certification Training* from 9 AM to 1 PM at Reed Creek Park will include hands-on insect and other invertebrate collection. Call 706-210-4027 to register.

Family Earth Fest at the Amphitheater from 10 AM – 2 PM featuring a Raptor Flight Show at noon. Other activities include butterfly release, games, art contest, demonstrations, inflatables, arts & crafts and more! **PETS WILL NOT BE ALLOWED AT EARTH FEST.** Also sponsored by *Natural Awakenings, GA Power, The Greenway Store, Augusta Deal\$, and Keep Columbia County Beautiful.* Call 706-312-7195 for more info.

2nd Annual CSRA RV & Boat Show at the Wildwood Park mega-ramp parking lot from noon to 5 PM. Gift certificates for the first 100 people and food, inflatables, and fun for the entire family! A bike and car show as well as boats, RV's, personal watercraft, and outdoor equipment. Call 706-541-0586 for more information.

- 1-2 *2010 U.S. Masters Disc Golf Championship* 10 AM – 5 PM at Wildwood Park will feature 150 professional and amateur players 40 years and older. First 100 spectators each day will receive a free golf disc and the opportunity to pay a round of disc golf. For more information, please call 706-261-6342.

- 2 Young Adult Program (ages 12-18) about *Henna Tattooing* at 2:30 PM in the Evans Library. Learn about the cultures and history of this ancient art form and get your own henna tattoo. Call 706-863-1946 to register.

- 5 *Nurturing Nature Walks* for 3-5 year olds at Reed Creek Park from 10–11 AM. Children must be accompanied by an adult. \$2 fee per child for non-members.

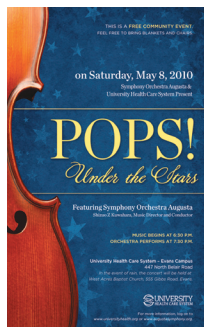
Gardening at Lunch Series at the Evans Library at 12:10-12:45 PM. This month County Extension Agent Charles Phillips will discuss *Maintaining Your Irrigation System.* Bring a lunch and a friend!

- 6 Young Adult Program (ages 12-18) about *Creepy Critters* at 5 PM in the Evans Library. Learn about local plants and bugs and complete an activity. Call 706-863-1946 to register.

- 7 *All About Frogs* at Reed Creek Park for ages 5+ from 8:30 – 9:30 PM. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Call 706-210-4027 to register. Free.

- 8 Please leave a bag of non-perishable items at your mailbox for the letter carriers to pick up for the National Association of Letter Carriers food drive. For more information on the food drive, please see www.goldenharvest.org or call 706-736-1199 x 217.

Symphony Orchestra Augusta & University Health Care System present *POPS! Under the Stars* – featuring SOA Shizuo Z Kuwahara, Music Director & Conductor. Music begins at 6:30 PM and the Orchestra performs at 7:30 PM. Bring a chair or blanket to this free outdoor concert held on the University Health Care System – Evans Campus on 447 North Belair Road. Food vendors will be on site.



- 15 *Mayfest* – a free dance concert by the Columbia County Ballet – will be presented in the amphitheater at 5 PM.



- 16 *Sunday Game Day* from 2-5 PM at the Evans Library. Join us for a variety of family-friendly board games – Scrabble, chess, checkers and more – or bring your own!

- 17 *Monday Night Book Discussion* on *South of Broad* by Pat Conroy at 6:30 PM at the Evans Library.

- 18 *Pond Jump* for ages 5+ at Reed Creek Park from 4:30-5:30 PM. Be prepared to get wet! Register by calling 706-210-4027. \$2 fee per child for non-members.

- 20 *Brown Bag Lunch Book Discussion* at 11:30 AM in the Evans Library. *The Human Stain* by Philip Roth will be discussed.

Nurturing Nature Walks for 3-5 year olds at Reed Creek Park from 4:30 – 5:30 PM. Children must be accompanied by an adult. \$2 fee per child for non-members.

- 21 Pick up folders for the Library's annual Summer Reading Program. Folders need to be turned in by July 31st to receive a certificate and prize!

- 23 *Summer Reading Kickoff Party* from 1-3 PM behind the Evans Library. Auggie the Green-Jacket mascot, games, face painting, live music and much more will be featured.

- 25 *Nature Painting* for ages 5+ at Reed Creek Park from 4:30-5:30 PM. Register by calling 706-210-4027. \$3 fee per child for non-members

- 27 *Adult Watercolor Class* open to all skill levels at Reed Creek Park from 4:30-5:30 PM. \$5 fee per person.

- 29 *Red, White & Blue Celebration* on the lawn of the Justice Center on Ronald Reagan Drive from 7:00 – 9:30 PM. The U.S. Air Force Reserve Band from Warner Robbins, GA will play, and fireworks will begin at dusk.



- 30 All libraries closed for Memorial Day.

- 31 All County offices and libraries closed for Memorial Day.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The *Young at Art* display is featured at the Evans Library, and Maurice Ades' artwork is being shown at the Euchee Creek Library. Ondaree Kelly-Tucker's art is on display at the Visitor Center next to the Savannah Rapids Pavilion until June 30th.